



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION VII
901 NORTH 5TH STREET
KANSAS CITY, KANSAS 66101

06 JAN 2006

Ms. Joan Roeseler
Director of Program Development Planning
FTA Region 7, 901 Locust Street, Suite 404
Kansas City, MO 64106

Ms. Donna Day
Division Manager
Transportation Corridor Improvement Group
East-West Gateway Council of Governments
One Memorial Drive, Suite 1600
St. Louis, MO 63102

Dear Ms. Roeseler and Ms. Day:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the St. Louis Metro South MetroLink Extension. Our review is provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) 42 U.S.C. 4231, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500-1508, and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). The DEIS was assigned the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) number 20050481.

Based on our overall review and the level of our comments, the EPA has rated the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for this project EC-2 (Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information). A copy of EPA's rating descriptions is provided as an enclosure to this letter.

This EC- 2 rating is based the uncertainty of potential impacts that could arise between now and the projected construction time frame. As you are aware, the useful 'life' of an EIS is considered to be 5 years; after that time period, additional analysis and documentation may be required. For more information, see the Council of Environmental Quality's (CEQ) website <http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm> and the "Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations" (<http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/regs/40/30-40.HTM#32>).

We have also attached additional comments which follow up to our initial letter dated January 22, 2004, listing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's scoping input with respect to human health and environmental issues for the study area. Our initial interests focused on air

**St. Louis Metro South MetroLink Extension
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Comments
January 6, 2006**

Air Quality – Section 3.4.1 Air Quality (affected environment) appears outdated as compared to Section 5.2.1 Air Quality Impacts. We recommend updating Section 3.4.1 to include the current St. Louis Area ozone non-attainment status for consistency in the document.

Historical Resources and Parks/Recreational Land, Section 4(f) – Table 3-16 Historic Sites is included under Section 3.3.2 Parkland and Conservation Areas. We recommend that this table be moved under Section 3.3.1 Historic and Archeological Resources.

If an Orange Alternative is selected as the preferred alternative, we recommend including a discussion identifying minimization of impacts through engineering design and/or appropriate mitigation for the 8.8 acres of parkland impacts.

Noise – We recommend that the FEIS include a discussion identifying the type and process of selecting the noise and vibration mitigation which is determined appropriate for the preferred alternative.

Water Quality – We recommend including a discussion of how the project will meet the “Metropolitan No-Discharge Stream” requirements of Gravois Creek and whether the project will likely impact this creek.

We also recommend describing where the impaired sections of the River Des Peres and Mississippi River are located in conjunction with this project and if these Rivers are likely to be impacted by the project.

We also encourage you to further investigate opportunities within the project to make improvements in water quality by reducing overland flow or by constructing vegetative buffers to filter sediment. Any mitigation measures identified should be included in the FEIS.

Wetlands - We recommend identifying the appropriate mitigation of impacted wetlands in the Wetland Section 5.2.4. The DEIS currently refers to wetland mitigation only in Section 5.2.5 Wildlife Habitat and Ecosystem Impacts.

Floodplains – The FEIS should include an analysis of the floodplain impacts which quantifies the project impacts to flood storage capacity and water flow impacts. This analysis should also include appropriate mitigation to reduce impacts in the area as well as up and downstream of the project.

Cumulative Impacts – We recommend that Section 5.4 - Cumulative and Secondary Impacts include an analysis of how this project synchronizes with city and county long range plans. This section should also identify any significant cumulative environmental impacts that are due to past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects. If significant environmental impacts are identified, any appropriate mitigation should also be identified in this section.

Summary Evaluation Measures – We recommend including environmental impacts criteria in the evaluation measures that will be used to evaluate and select the preferred alternative in Section 6.1.5. This project has potential significant impacts to floodplains, air quality, park land, noise, and vibration, and these impacts should be considered during the preferred selection process to meet the intent of NEPA.

Draft Environmental Impact Statement Rating Definitions

Environmental Impact of the Action

"LO" (Lack of Objections)

The EPA review has not identified any potential environmental impacts requiring substantive changes to the proposal. The review may have opportunities for application of mitigation measures that could be accomplished with no more than minor changes to the proposal.

"EC" (Environmental Concerns)

The EPA review has identified environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment. Corrective measures require changes to the preferred alternative or application of mitigation measures that can reduce the environmental impact. EPA would like to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EO" (Environmental Objections)

The EPA review has identified significant environmental impacts that must be avoided in order to provide adequate protection for the environment. Corrective measures may require substantial changes to the preferred alternative or consideration of some other project alternative (including the no action alternative or a new alternative. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts.

"EU" (Environmentally Unsatisfactory)

The EPA review has identified adverse environmental impacts that are of sufficient magnitude that they are unsatisfactory from the standpoint of public health or welfare or environmental quality. EPA intends to work with the lead agency to reduce these impacts. If the potentially unsatisfactory impacts are not corrected at the final EIS stage, this proposal will be recommended for referral to the CEQ.

Adequacy of the Impact Statement

"Category 1" (Adequate)

EPA believes the draft EIS adequately sets forth the environmental impact(s) of the preferred alternative and those of the alternatives reasonably available to the project or action. No further analysis or data collection is necessary, but the reviewer may suggest the addition of clarifying language or information.

"Category 2" (Insufficient Information)

The draft EIS does not contain sufficient information for EPA to fully assess environmental impacts that should be avoided in order to fully protect the environment, or the EPA reviewer has identified new reasonably available alternatives that are within the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which could reduce the environmental impacts of the action. The identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussion should be included in the final EIS.

"Category 3" (Inadequate)

EPA does not believe that the draft EIS adequately assesses potentially significant environmental impacts of the action, or the EPA reviewer has identified new, reasonably available alternatives that are outside of the spectrum of alternatives analyzed in the draft EIS, which should be analyzed in order to reduce the potentially significant environmental impacts. EPA believes that the identified additional information, data, analyses, or discussions are of such a magnitude that they should have full public review at a draft stage. EPA does not believe that the draft EIS is adequate for the purposes of the NEPA and/or Section 309 review, and thus should be formally revised and made available for public comment in a supplemental or revised draft EIS. On the basis of the potential significant impacts involved, this proposal could be a candidate for referral to the CEQ.